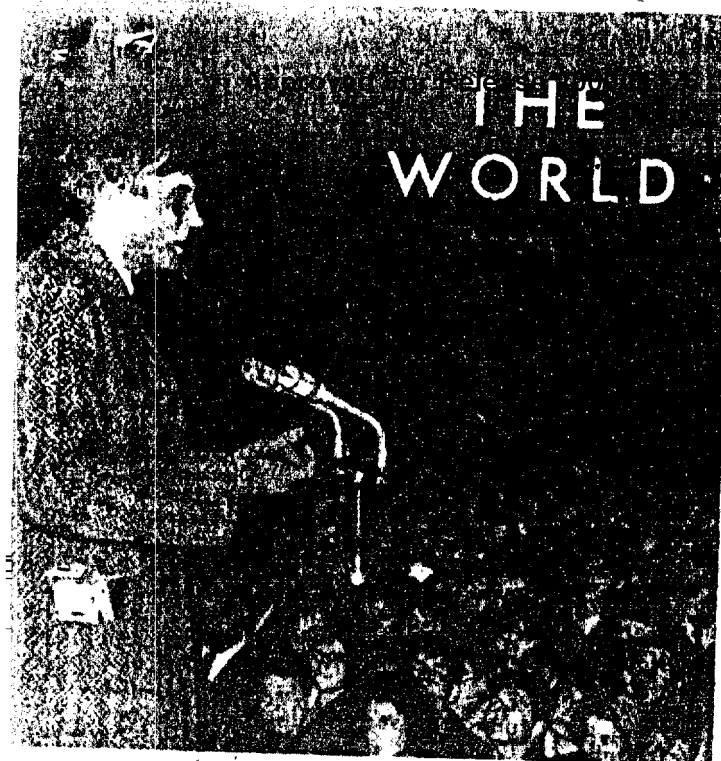


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# THE WORLD



POET EVTUSHENKO RECITING AT MAYAKOVSKY SQUARE

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## RUSSIA

### A Longing for Truth

(See Cover)

The thaw (the real one, that is) was at its height in Moscow last week. Ice floes were in full flight down the river. At last the Kremlin's onion domes were bare of snow. In Sokolniki Park, small boys whooped after model planes and grownups silently drank up the sun. It was the time when, Chekhov wrote, "spring is ready to enter the soul."

Ten snows have melted since Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953. In the political and social thaw that has followed the tyrant's end, regimentation persists but the cruder kinds of terror have vanished almost as completely as the snow. To the 100 million Russians who are under 25 today, and who make up nearly a half of the Soviet Union's entire population, Stalinism is little more than a bad childhood memory. They have not been broken by the fear that haunts their fathers nor infected with the blind faith that guided some of their Bolshevik grandfathers. These youngsters have been called a lost generation. They could more fairly be called a seeking generation.

Soviet Russia is still a Sparta, not an Athens. It has no freedom in the Western sense, but dissatisfaction is becoming overt in a way that it never dared be before.

**Engineers of Souls.** Though incomparably better off than their elders, young Russians today ask far more of their life and are more critical of its shortcomings than any previous generation. Youth is reaching out beyond Mother Russia for its styles and slang. "Decadent" tastes that were taboo under Stalin are now status symbols. Young educated Russians are hungry for abstract art, passionately addicted to jazz, universally scorned by their elders.

(they can read these authors in translation, but see no newspapers except Communist ones). Soviet movies such as *The Cranes Are Flying* sympathetically explore their conflicts and misgivings. Even the Communist Party's official youth publications discuss sins and shortcomings of the system; this would have been heresy ten years ago.

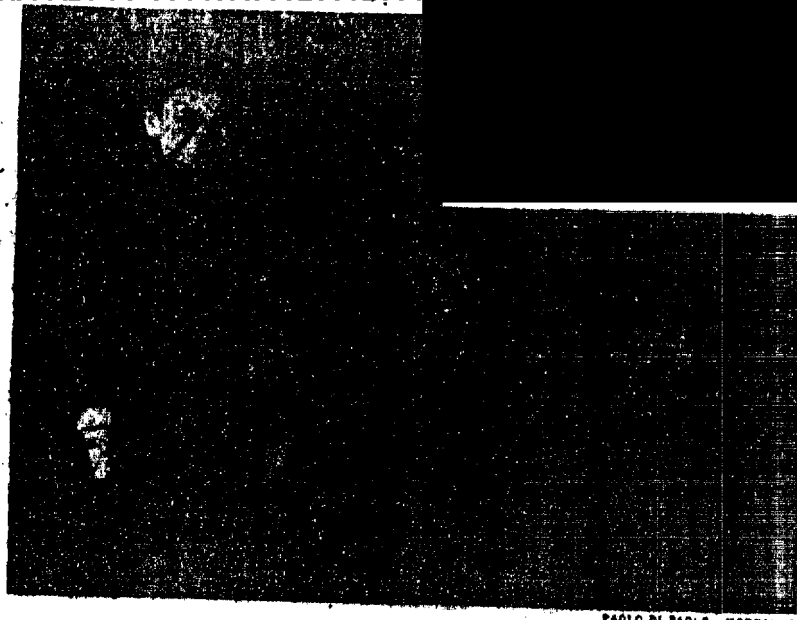
The new generation's doughtiest champions have been authors and poets; the very types who were the most closely indentured servants of Stalinism. Perhaps no other tyrant in history has ever imposed so rigorous a system of thought control as that of Joseph Stalin; his most powerful and systematic weapon was the doctrine called "socialist realism," by which artists became "engineers of souls," whose only function was to mass-produce Communist propaganda. Literature started up again soon after Stalin's death. In the six years since Nikita Khrushchev demolished Stalin's godhead at the 20th Party Congress, Soviet writers have proclaimed, even if they have not always been free to practice, a new "literature of truth."

**Siberian Roots.** Poets in particular have won greater latitude than they have enjoyed since the early, heady days of the Revolution. From medieval times, when illiterate peasants listened spellbound to wandering "reciters," the intellectual Russians have always revered poets above potentates. Among them—from Pushkin, who died "invoking freedom in an age of fear," to Pasternak, who, at the cost of much personal bravery, was almost the only writer of his generation to deride Stalin's shibboleths—have been Russia's most impassioned foes of injustice. Evgeny Yevtushenko, the most famed and gifted young poet in Russia today, follows in their footsteps.

out where many another "Russian poet has ended—in Siberia. The blond, bean-pole-tall (6 ft. 3 in.) poet comes of Ukrainian, Tartar and Latvian stock that has never, he grins, "been collectivized." Though he likes to be taken for a country boy, he is a Muscovite by upbringing and accent, and his background rubs off on his sophisticated, often colloquial poetic style. His deep appeal lies in a rare faculty for sensing—and transmitting—the doubts and yearnings of a generation that has lost its illusions and is beginning to find its voice. Evtushenko is this generation's flag-bearer, a daring young man, but not to the point of martyrdom.

**Noiseless Verse.** Poets of protest such as Evgeny Yevtushenko (pronounced Yevgeny Yefstushenko) have, in the past, been isolated from the vast, unlettered mass of Russian society. Today, through far-ranging recital tours and huge editions of their verse, they are reaching the widest, best-educated public in Russian history. The result has been a remarkable poetic revival. In theaters and student hostels from White Russia to Central Asia, overflow crowds listen to poets with almost religious fervor. On Sunday nights in summer, city squares echo to the liquid, incantatory cadences of Pushkin, Lermontov and, often, Zhenya Yevtushenko. One good reason for poetry's popularity: scraps of "noiseless verse," as Russian writers call work that is too avant-garde or radical for publication, can easily be mimeographed and surreptitiously distributed from one group of youths to another. Though several underground poetry sheets have drawn official condemnation, not a single editor has lost his head.

Simply put, Russia's writers are seeking truth. Evtushenko's verse and his contemporaries' conversation come back to the word time and again. Their generation has seen truth ripped from maps and histories; their search for facts is an obsession. After Stalin's death, Yevtushenko went back to see his great-grandfather's



TYPICAL REAL GONE GUYS IN MOSCOW  
They like to hang around Brod-vay.